

AGING: 'This journey can be so complex...we need to hear stories from others'

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caring for an aging loved one. "This journey can be so complex and convoluted, we need to hear stories from others," Wade said. "...We need to hear each other's stories because in each other's stories we'll hear of road-bumps and potholes along the way, and maybe, just maybe it'll help us anticipate those a little bit, and help us prepare."

Wade spoke about his experience taking care of his aging grandmother and the ups and downs that came with it — including her death, which, against her wishes, occurred at the hospital following a stroke. "Although the hospital wasn't her choice, it actually turned out pretty well," he said, as friends were able to come and say goodbye, which might not have happened if she had died at home.

"I didn't know that at the time, I didn't see that at the time," he said, "when I realized that, at the hospital, there was

actually a gift to be received, I was able to let go a little bit of my guilt."

Wade stressed that, while everybody's experience will be different, it is important to plan ahead as much as possible in order to avoid misunderstandings that could worsen a situation. One of the most important ways to prepare is talking with your loved ones about their wishes in different scenarios; and even though that conversation can be difficult, Wade said, "This is an act of love and an act of honoring your aging parents and loved ones."

"The more that we can plan, the more that we can anticipate, the more that we can communicate, the more that we can become more aware of our emotions and our own limitations, the better prepared we'll be — whether we're the loved one that needs caring for or will need caring for, or the ones doing the caring —

the better prepared we'll be to have a successful and pretty smooth, hopefully, outcome," he said.

Even if you're already in the midst of caregiving for a loved one, Wade said, "it's still possible to step back and take a breath and pause and re-imagine this phase of life both for you and your aging loved one, or the other way around, if that's your case."

While Wade said that he wished he had taken more time to be truly present with his grandmother, he called his experience as her caregiver "a gift," and encouraged others to adopt that mindset.

"There's heartache in watching a loved one age. There is," he said. "Acknowledging and embracing that pain is important, but even more, I think it's important to flip a different switch in our brains and to recognize that this season of life, whether you're going through it now or you're going through

it with a loved one, is a tremendous gift. It's something that can open up deep, spiritual pathways that aren't really available anywhere else."

An attendee later commented on her experience caring for her aging parents, and on trying to prepare herself for their eventual deaths, saying, "I'm going to miss them so much but it's just going to be so much easier because I'm taking care of them the best I can ... and it is a privilege."

The next two events in the series are scheduled to take place at the Hood River Valley Adult Center (2010 Sterling Place) both from noon to 1 p.m.; the next event is scheduled for Feb. 19, and will feature a presentation by Britta Wilson, MA in Gerontology and program coordinator for Volunteers in Action at Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital, on environmental changes/adaptations that can



Photo by Emily Fitzgerald

ABOUT 20 people attended the first part of GEM and AGA's three part series. Part two is scheduled for Feb. 19, noon to 1 p.m., at the Hood River Valley Adult Center, with Britta Wilson presenting.

make life easier and safer for elders; and in March, the team will guide participants through AARP's "Prepare to Care," a planning guide for families. Take-home resources will also be available, including Elder-care specialist Gail Goeller's book, "Coming of Age with Aging Parents."

For more information on upcoming events, visit GEM's website, gorgeem.org.

BORDER: Lunch presentation tackles topic of immigration

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"I don't feel like I have a sense of how awful the situations are that these people are leaving," answered one man. "It hinders us from feeling admiration and respect and compassion. People have this perception of, 'They're coming here to steal or take our jobs.' ... I can't imagine taking your kid and walking thousands of miles."

Contreras said the closest example she could think of would be if your house were to catch fire: The loss of the safety of a home, being forced to move from shelter to shelter or being on the streets.

But because we know the language and how to navigate the system, it's not a true comparison, she added. Some migrants only speak certain dialects; all are at risk of being taken advantage of by those who wish to profit from their desperation.

One woman asked how someone from Guatemala or El Salvador could come up with money to pay for a smuggler. "The easiest way is the drug industry," Contreras said. "Not

much of a want, but it ends up being a need to survive. They act as mules." Families might also raise money that the migrants later pay back.

Another asked if there was nowhere in Central America that would be safe for those trying to cross into the U.S.

"It's the scale of risk — come to the U.S. and make money and stay safe versus poor wages and maybe not being safe," Contreras said.

"Do they know the risk of border separation?" she asked.

"If you're trying to escape violence and possible death, any risk is worth it," Contreras said.

"What are the most important things white people can do right now to help?" asked another woman.

"Vote," Contreras said. "Volunteer for organizations. Donate to charities that help immigrants. Make them feel welcome."

"Voting is your number one tool that can help every individual here to have a decent life and be human," she added. "We're all human at the end of the day and we have to treat

one another with respect."

She also suggested learning conversational Spanish.

"Making that effort as monolingual English speakers — a simple 'good morning' — you can see and notice the facial reaction. That in itself is going to spark a good opening for them. 'This person is trustworthy; I can trust them' ...

"I think the schools here are doing a great job, getting more bilingual and bicultural staff, but I don't know if, in the real world, that's really the case."

"It's a tricky subject to talk about," she said. "I appreciate everyone coming and giving me the opportunity to present."

Lunch and Learn continues

Contreras will host this Thursday's Lunch and Learn conversation, "Mi Sueno Americano/ My American Dream," on Jan. 30. On Feb. 6, Columbia Gorge Pride Alliance hosts "Gender Identity." Lunch and Learn events take place in the library's downstairs meeting room and begin at 1 p.m. All are welcome to attend.



Photo by Trisha Walker

NUBIA CONTRERAS presents a video on immigration at the Jan. 23 Lunch and Learn event.

HEARTS OF GOLD: Programs honored

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inated by a previously honored organization, FISH Food Bank.

Currently community members Jeff McCaw, Mary Finley, Kym Zannmiller and Leslie Hidle serve on the board with Holmson. They would tell you it's the hundreds of volunteers working tirelessly throughout the year that allow them to provide meals, toys, gifts and a warm sense of community during the holidays, Frost noted. The nomination described the Christmas Project "reflecting the heart and soul of a community that cares," said a press release.

Along with the award celebration, guests will hear about the Providence Brookside Sunshine Club, the beneficiary of the event. The Sunshine Club provides a day group for people with memory loss disease. It's a place where families can help their loved ones socialize, be active, share community and enjoy



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

PACKAGE CENTRAL: Board members Mary Finley, left, and Kym Zannmiller box up food in December 2019 at Hood River County Fairgrounds.

themselves, said a press release.

"It's a tradition to highlight foundation programs each year after awards and we know stories and photos about the Sunshine Club will touch the hearts of our guests. It will be a very special night," said Frost.

LEARN MORE

Hearts of Gold takes place at 6 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 29 at the Best Western Plus Hood River Inn. In addition to honoring the award winners, guests will be treated to a cocktail reception, live music and a gourmet meal. Tickets are \$100 each and sponsorships are available. Call 541-387-6242 to purchase tickets. All proceeds from the evening benefit Providence Brookside's Sunshine Club day respite program for people living with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

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WEATHER FOR HOOD RIVER, OR | JANUARY 29-FEBRUARY 4, 2020

Today	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
46° /38° Cloudy	48° /46° Cloudy	59° /49° Low clouds and milder	56° /32° A couple of showers possible	42° /30° Cooler with a chance of rain	51° /40° Partly sunny; chance of am snow shower	45° /32° Mostly Cloudy

WEATHER SPONSORED BY:

Actual High/Low
January 22-27

Wednesday 44/33

Thursday 43/38

Friday 50/37

Saturday 56/39

Sunday 54/39

Monday 47/41

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